



STEEL

APPROVED
BY THE
COMICS
CODE
AUTHORITY

BY L. SIMONSON,
BATISTA & FABER



BOB
JANKE
'94

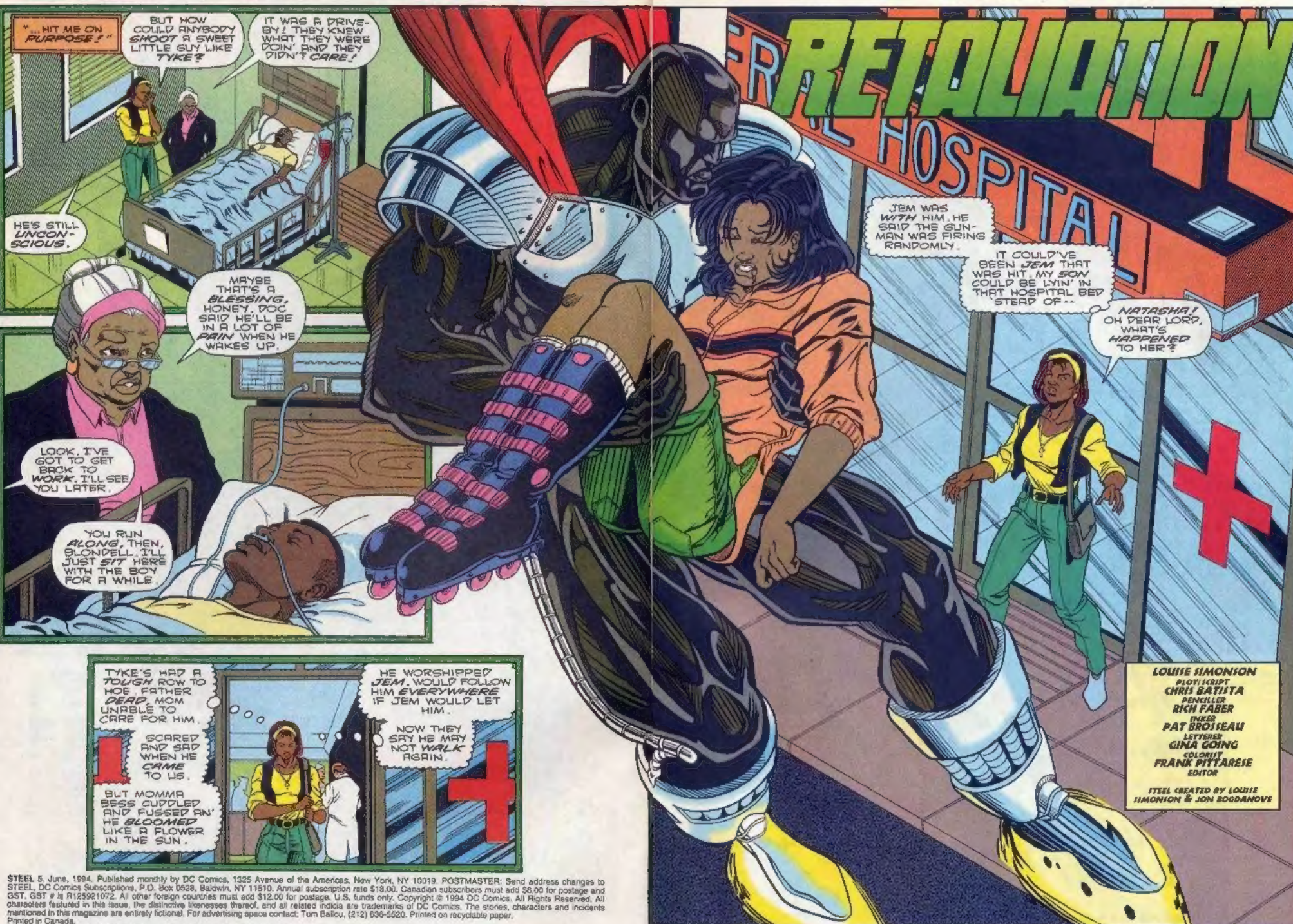
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"...HIT ME ON PURPOSE!"

BUT HOW COULD ANYBODY SHOOT A SWEET LITTLE GUY LIKE TYKE?

IT WAS A DRIVE-BY! THEY KNEW WHAT THEY WERE DOIN' AND THEY DIDN'T CARE!

HE'S STILL UNCONSCIOUS.

MAYBE THAT'S A BLESSING, HONEY. DOC SAID HE'LL BE IN A LOT OF PAIN WHEN HE WAKES UP.

LOOK, I'VE GOT TO GET BACK TO WORK. I'LL SEE YOU LATER.

YOU RUN ALONG, THEN, BLONDELL. I'LL JUST SIT HERE WITH THE BOY FOR A WHILE.

JEM WAS WITH HIM. HE SAID THE GUN-MAN WAS FIRING RANDOMLY.

IT COULD'VE BEEN JEM THAT WAS HIT. MY SON COULD BE LYIN' IN THAT HOSPITAL BED STEAD OF--

NATASHA! OH DEAR LORD, WHAT'S HAPPENED TO HER?

TYKE'S HAD A TOUGH ROW TO HOE. FATHER DEAD, MOM UNABLE TO CARE FOR HIM.

SCARED AND SAD WHEN HE CAME TO US.

BUT MOMMA BESS CUDDLED AND FUSSED AN' HE BLOOMED LIKE A FLOWER IN THE SUN.

HE WORSHIPPED JEM. WOULD FOLLOW HIM EVERYWHERE IF JEM WOULD LET HIM.

NOW THEY SAY HE MAY NOT WALK AGAIN.

LOUISE SIMONSON
PLOT/SCRIPT
CHRIS BATAIA
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RICH FABER
INKER
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STEEL CREATED BY LOUISE SIMONSON & JON BOGDANOVIC



COMING THROUGH!

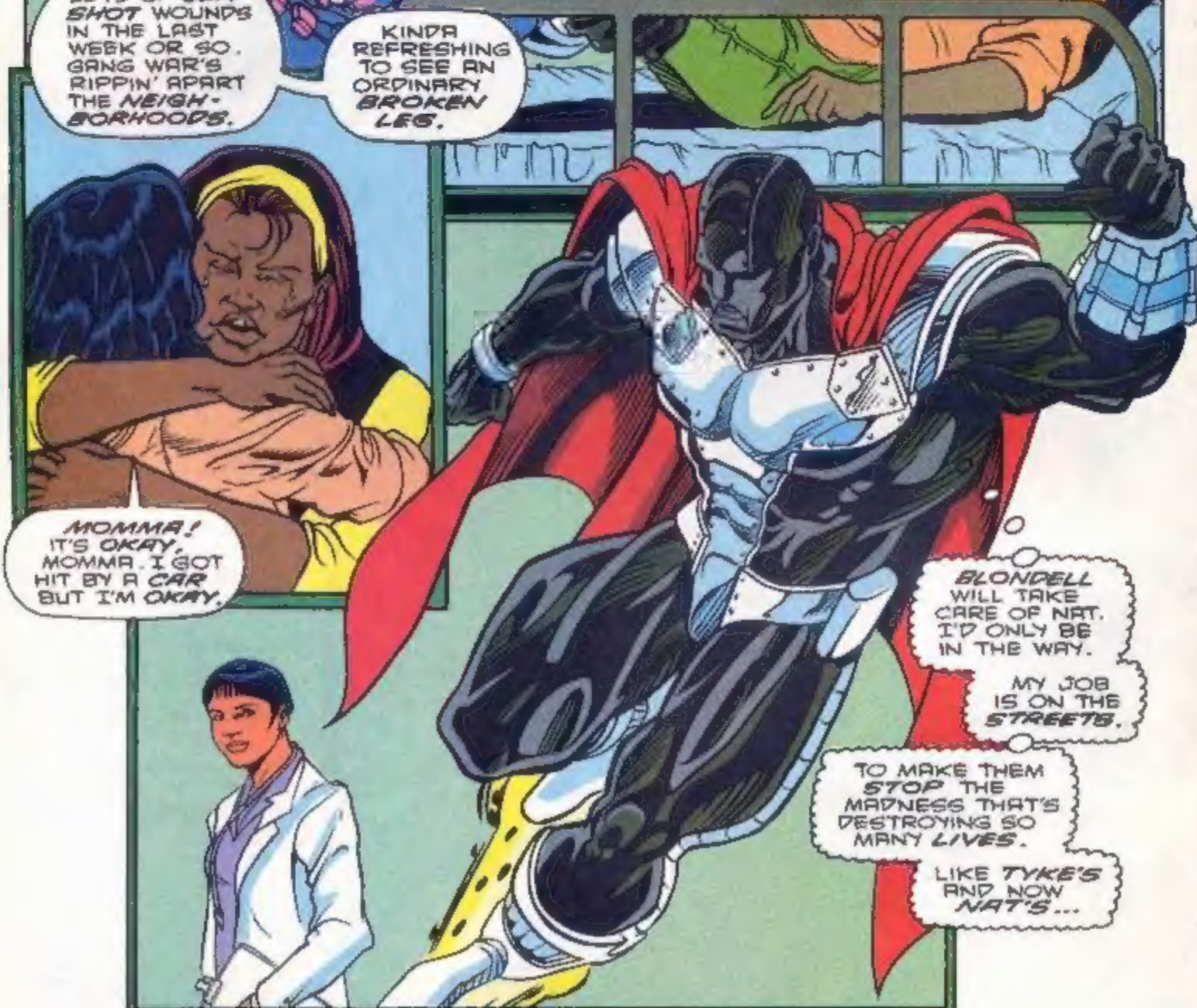
IT'S HER LEG, SHE THINKS. MAYBE HER ANKLE.



MY BABY!

LOTS OF SUN-SHOT WOUNDS IN THE LAST WEEK OR SO. GANG WAR'S RIPPIN' APART THE NEIGHBORHOODS.

KINDA REFRESHING TO SEE AN ORDINARY BROKEN LEG.



MOMMA! IT'S OKAY. MOMMA. I GOT HIT BY A CAR BUT I'M OKAY.

BLONDELL WILL TAKE CARE OF NAT. I'D ONLY BE IN THE WAY.

MY JOB IS ON THE STREETS.

TO MAKE THEM STOP THE MADNESS THAT'S DESTROYING SO MANY LIVES.

LIKE TYKE'S AND NOW NAT'S...

...TO SAY
NOTHING OF
JEMAH'S.

CHECK IT OUT!
EASTLIES HIT
LITTLE TYKE IN A
DRIVE-BY AND WHAT
HAPPENS?

M'MAN HERE
RETAILIATES BIG
TIME! FIRE-BOMBED
ONE O' THEIR SAFE-
HOUSES.

IT WAS
NUTHIN'
COWBOY!

BUT MAYBE IT'LL
TEACH 'EM NOT
TO MESS WITH SIN-
AVE'S PEOPLE AN'
SINAVE'S TURF!

TYKE'S JUST
A LITTLE KID,
MAN. THEY HAD
NO BUSINESS
GUNNIN' HIM
DOWN.

I'M ROLLIN'
OUT. GOTTA
VISIT TYKE IN
THE HOSPITAL.

FLY
BEEMER!
CUSTOMIZED,
RIGHT?

YEAH,
FORMER
OWNER
LET IT
GET BEAT-
UP.

NEVER
LIKED
BLUE
PAINT
ON A CAR.
RED'S
DEFINITELY
AN...

"...IMPROVEMENT."

DOC SAID
PEOPLE YOU KNOW
SHOULD **TALK**
TO YOU, TYKE, EVEN
IF YOU **ARE** UN-
CONSCIOUS.

SAID
MAYBE IT'D
HELP BRING YOU
AROUND.

I JUST WANT
YOU TO KNOW
I **GOT 'EM** FOR
YOU, MAN!

THOSE
EASTLIES
WHO SHOT
YOU UP! I
MADE 'EM
PAY.



NOW MAYBE
THEY'LL THINK
TWICE BEFORE
THEY--

J-JEM...?

W-WHERE
AM I?
I... **HURT!**



CAN'T TELL TYKE
THE DOCS SAID
HE MIGHT NOT
WALK AGAIN.
MAYBE THEY'RE
WRONG. MAYBE--

J-JEM...? **WHAT
HAPPENED?**



YOU'RE
IN THE
HOSPITAL,
MAN.

SOME EASTLY
SHOT YOU. A
DRIVE-BY. BUT
I **FIXED 'EM.**

YOU **DID?**

'CAUSE WE'RE
LIKE **BROTHERS,**
RIGHT? LIKE WE
BELONG TO THE
SAME **GANG?**
AN' WE **STICK
TOGETHER?**

NAW, 'CAUSE
WE'RE BROTHERS
LIKE WE'RE
FAMILY. AN'
YEAH, WE
**STICK TO-
GETHER.**

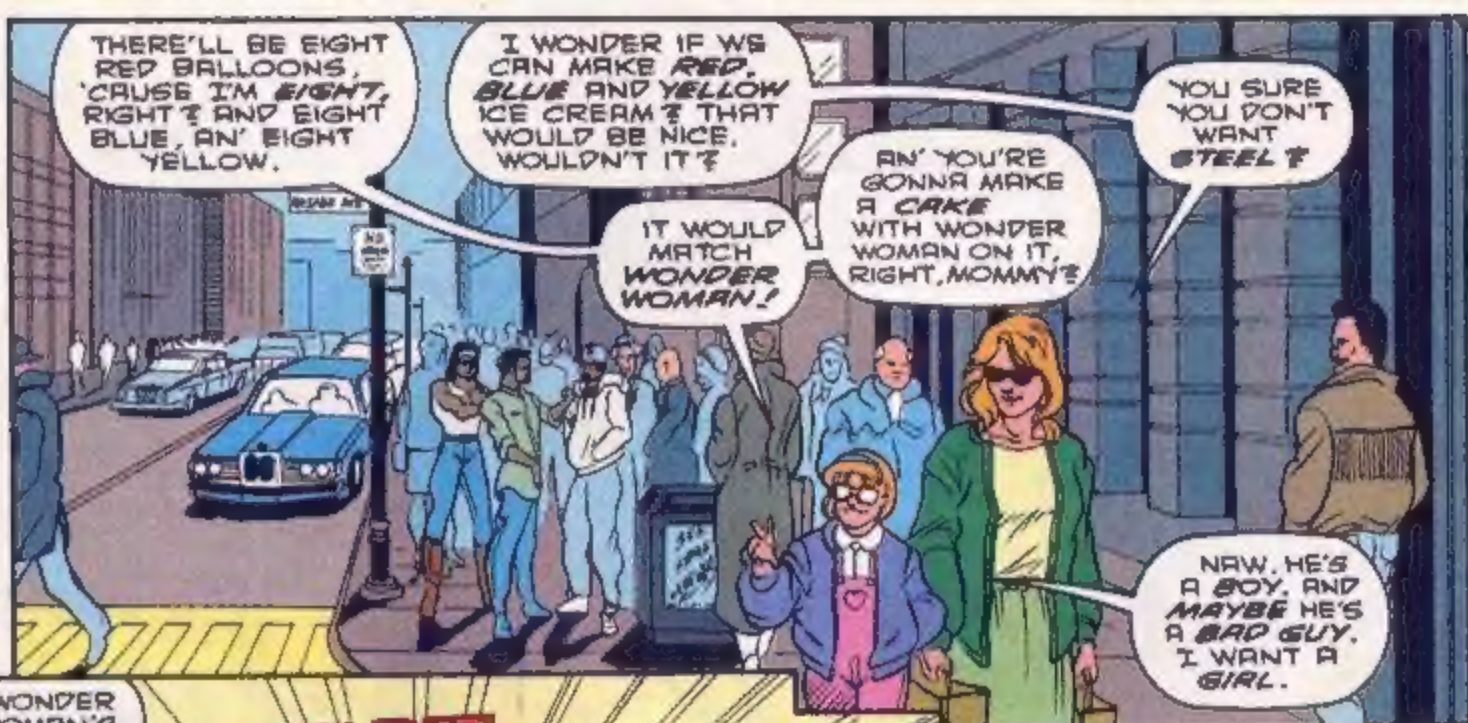
TYKE?
YOU'RE
AWAKE!



NAT! YEAH, I WAS
SO EXCITED I **FORGOT.**
GET THE **DOC!** HURRY,
NAT! AND CALL MOM
AND **GRANDMA.**



WE GOTTA
TELL 'EM. TYKE
WOKE UP! HE'S
GONNA BE **OKAY!**



NEARBY...

TYKE'S AWAKE,
POOR LITTLE
FELLA. I'LL JUST
POP IN FOR A
WHILE 'FORE I
GO HOME.

THANK
HEAVEN NAT'S
OKAY. JUST A
BROKEN LEG.
SHE COULD
HAVE BEEN
KILLED.

B-DAT-DAT-DAT

SUNFIRE!
USED TO HEAR
MUSIC IN THIS
NEIGHBORHOOD.

AND CHILDREN
LAUGHING.
NOW ALL YOU
HEAR IS--

AWRIGHT,
BABY! THIS
IS WHERE YOU
GET YOURS!

AAK!
HELP! GET
AWAY FROM
ME! HELP!

EEEEEE!

SHADDUP!

SMACK!

YOU SAVED OUR
LIVES! THOSE
MEN BACK THERE
THEY'RE DEAD. WE
COULD HAVE BEEN
KILLED.

IN REAL
LIFE, YOU'RE
COOLER THAN
SUPERMAN!
YOU'RE A
GOOD GUY,
RIGHT?

MOMMY,
MAYBE I
DO WANT
STEEL ON
MY CAKE!

EEEEEE!
LISTEN!
SOMEONE
SCREAM-
ING!

WAIT FOR
THE POLICE!
TELL THEM WHAT
HAPPENED WHEN
THEY ARRIVE.

SOUNDS
LIKE--

--BLONDELL!

STEEL!

A TAR-FREAK! RIVETS BOUNCE OFF HIS BACK!

THOOOMB!

THOOOMB!

NO! ONE RIPPED A GASH IN HIS ARM! DRUG MUST BE WEARING OFF.

AARGH!

HE'S REVERTING TO NORMAL. HE--

...J-JOHN...

BLONDELL,
ARE YOU ALL
RIGHT?

DAMN! I
FEEL LIKE
SUCH A
WASTE.

OUT THERE
SAVING STRANGERS
WHILE MY OWN FAMILY
WAS BEIN' MUGGED
BY ONE OF THE
EASTLIES TWO BLOCKS
AWAY.

IT'S
OKAY,
JOHN. I'M
FINE.

THIS GANG
VIOLENCE...
IT'S GOT TO
STOP.

THEY GOT
THREE
OF US NOW.

PROBABLY
TRIED TO HIT
JEM AN'
MISSED... GOT
POOR LITTLE
TYKE IN-
STEAD.

BUT WHY
US? WHY ARE
THEY DOIN'
THIS TO US?

BLONDELL...
WHAT DO
YOU MEAN?
WHO ARE
"THEY" ...?

THEY SAID
WHOEVER HIT
ME WAS
DRIVIN' A
BMW.
CUSTOMIZED
MAYBE.

CUSTOM-
IZED...?

YEAH, A DARK
GREENISH
COLOR. TYKE'S
SHOT. AN'
NOW MOM'S
BEEN
MUGGED.

THAT SOUNDS
LIKE THAT
BEEMER COW-
BOY BOOSTED...
THE ONE HE'S
HAVIN' PAINTED
RED.

BUT COWBOY'S
SINAVE'S BOSS.
HE'S GOT NO
REASON TO
HIT NAT ...

IT
STINKS...
YA KNOW,
JEM?

I KNOW.

"...OR DOES HE?"

ONLY ONE WAY TO FIND OUT. HIDE IN HIS TRUNK... FOLLOW HIM WHEN HE GETS OUT.

SKI MASK. GOON WHO HIT TYKE WAS MASKED

WHAT COLOR CAR WAS HE DRIVING? DARK...

THANKS, WEASEL. PAINT JOES KICKIN'!

JG-88

"...MAYBE BLUE...?"

SINAVE PROTECTS ITS OWN. AN' EACH OTHER'S FAMILIES.

COWBOY'S HEADIN' TOWARD AMALGAM'S CLINIC.

FIRST YOU HIT THE WRONG KID THEN YOU BLOW THE ATTACK ON IRON'S SISTER-IN-LAW.

TAR DOESN'T DO IT FOR YOU, DOES IT, COWBOY?

MAYBE S-TAR WILL PUMP YOU UP STRONG ENOUGH TO TAKE OUT OLD BESS.

IT DOESN'T MAKE SENSE. THERE'S A WINDOW 'ROUND THE SIDE. I WONDER...

WRONG KID? HE WAS GUNNIN' FOR ME? AND NOW HE'S GONNA HIT GRANDMA?!! THAT'S TRIFE!

IRON'S SISTER-IN-LAW WASN'T THE PROBLEM. STEEL SHOWED UP

WHAT'S GOIN' DOWN, AMALGAM? WHY THEM? WHAT THEY GOT TA DO WITH STEEL?

COLONEL HAS A VENDETTA AGAINST IRONS FROM WAY BACK IRONS USED TO WORK FOR AMER-TEK, YOU KNOW

AN' STEEL JUST BLEW THE HECK OUT OF AMER-TEK'S NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS YOU SAYIN' IRONS IS STEEL?

EVEN WITHOUT HIS ARMOR, IRONS PROVED TOO STRONG TO TAKE OUT PERSONALLY.

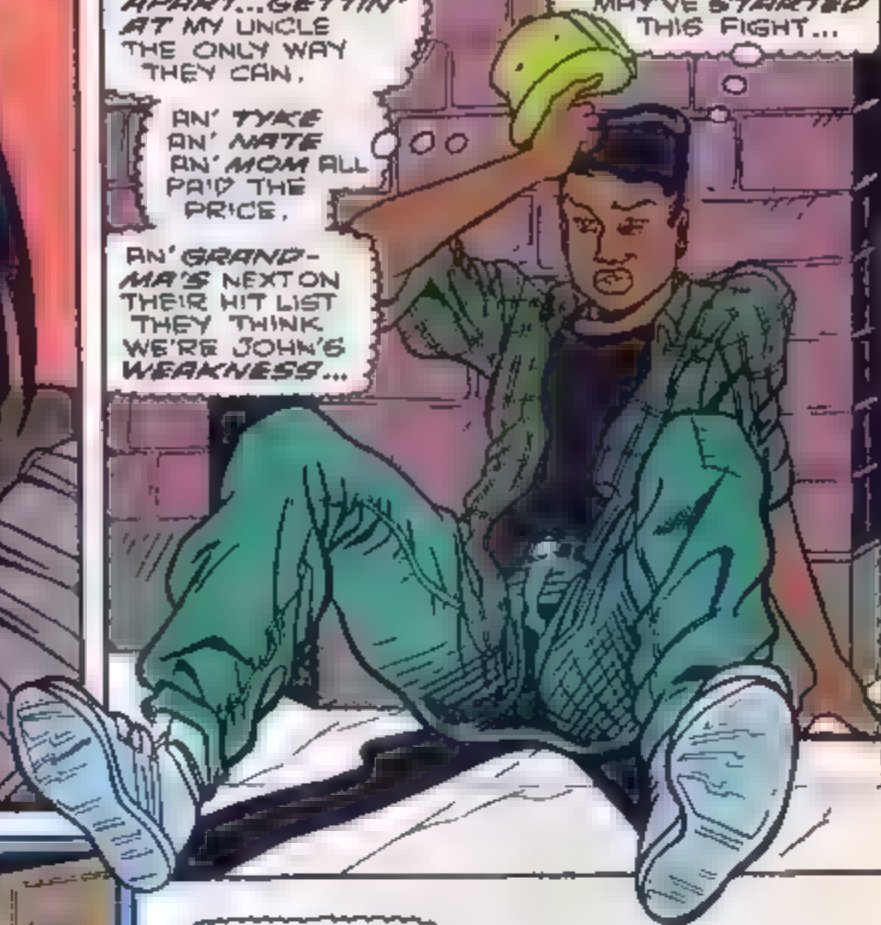
SO THE COLONEL IS HAVING US HIT HIM WHERE HE'S WEAKEST.

THEY'RE TAKIN' OUR FAMILY APART...GETTIN' AT MY UNCLE THE ONLY WAY THEY CAN.

AN' TYKE AN' NATE AN' MOM ALL PAID THE PRICE.

AN' GRAND-MA'S NEXT ON THEIR HIT LIST THEY THINK WE'RE JOHN'S WEAKNESS...

...BUT WE'RE NOT WEAK AT ALL. JOHN MAYVE STARTED THIS FIGHT...



"...BUT I'M THE ONE'S GONNA FINISH IT"

COWBOY LEADS SINAVE, LARGE AN' IN CHARGE

NOW I GOT THE STUFF--



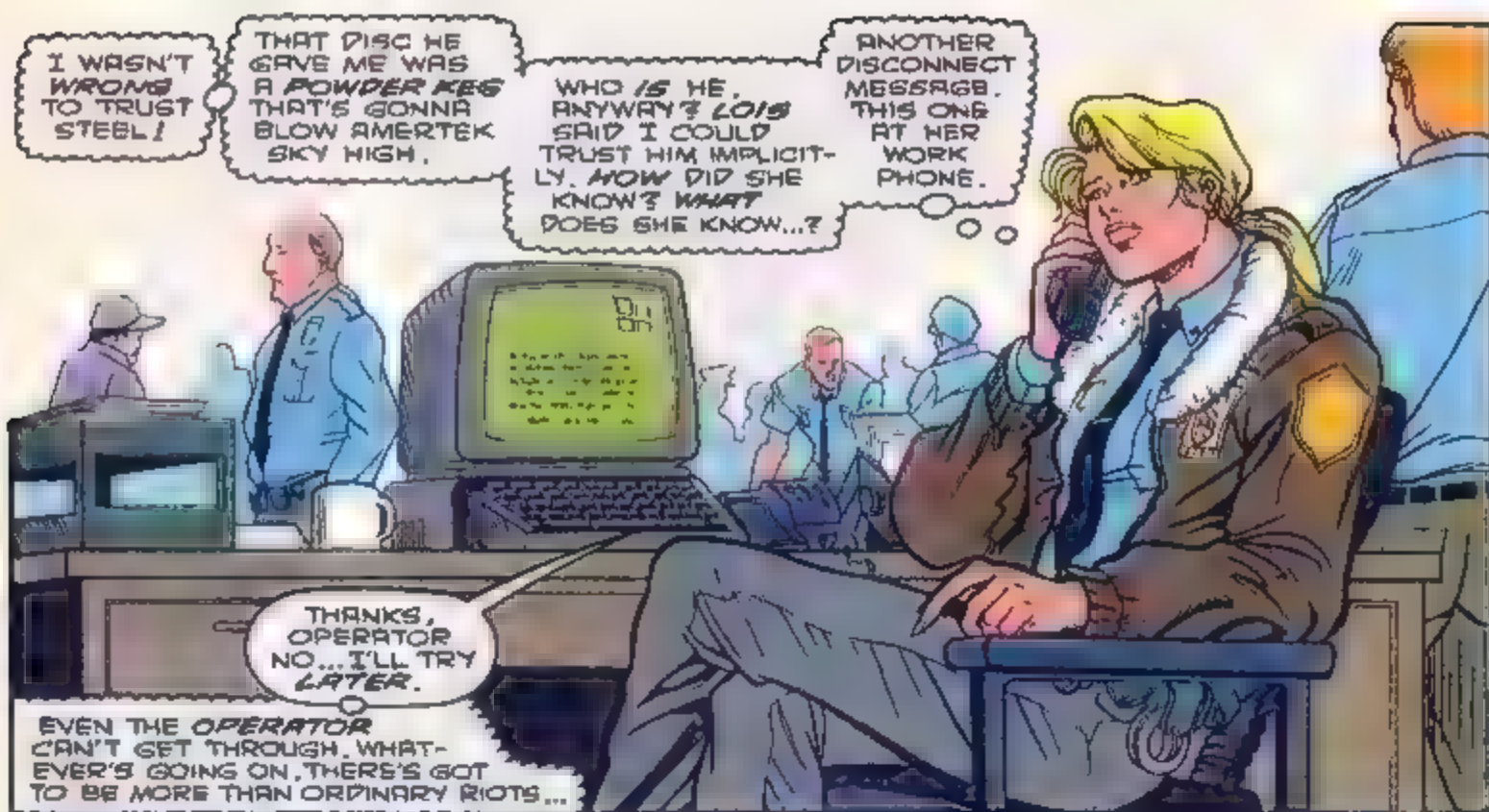
--TWO KINDS OF TAR. DOUBLE TROUBLE--

AN' COWBOY'S 'BOLT TO RUN INTO SOMEBODY HIS OWN SIZE.



I THOUGHT HE WAS MY FRIEND. ALMOST LIKE A BROTHER. I WAS WRONG.

AN' IF I WAS WRONG 'BOUT COWBOY, WHAT ELSE HAVE I BEEN WRONG ABOUT?



I WASN'T
WRONG
TO TRUST
STEEL!

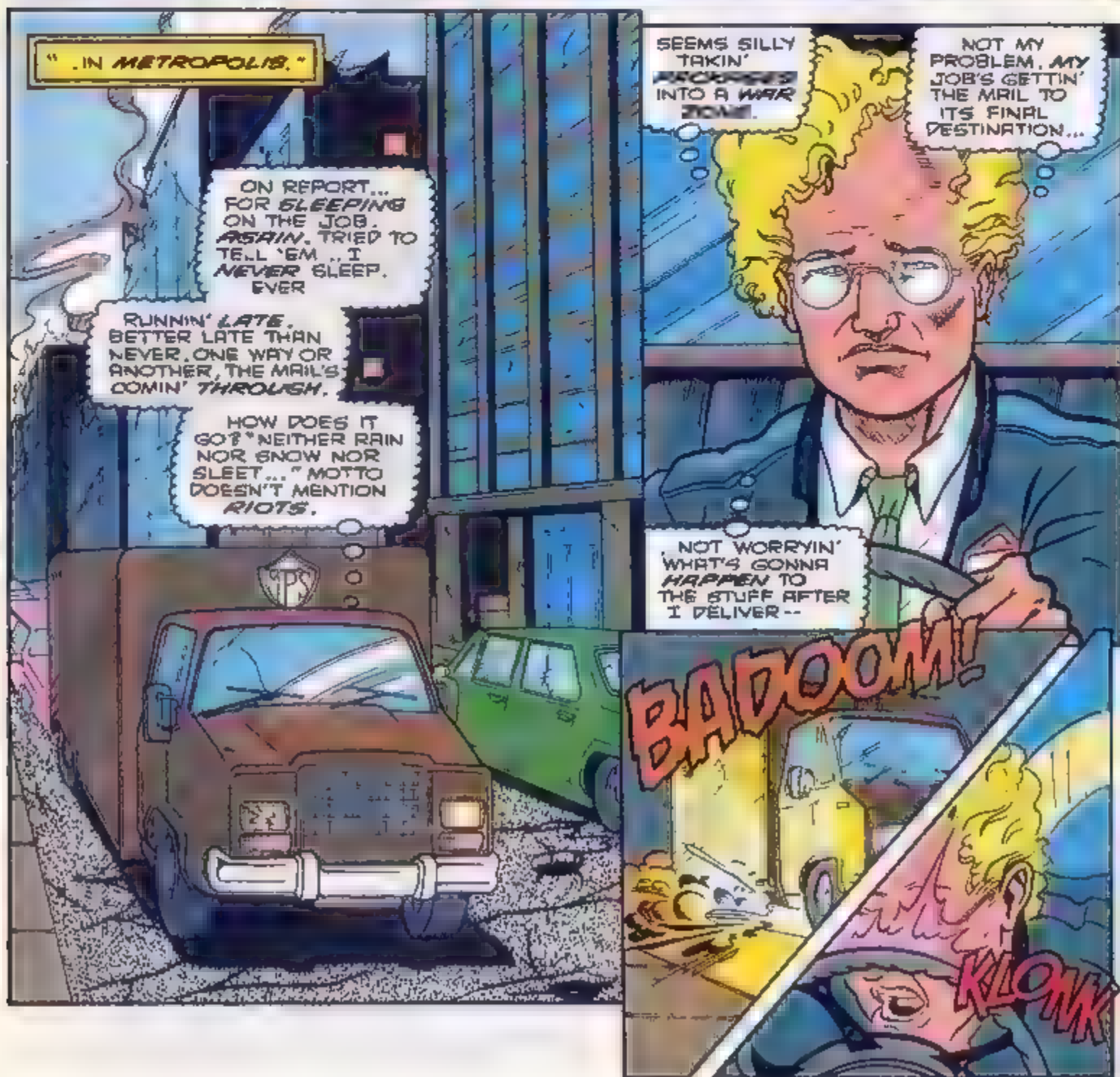
THAT DISC HE
GAVE ME WAS
A POWDER KEG
THAT'S GONNA
BLOW AMERTEK
SKY HIGH.

WHO IS HE,
ANYWAY? LOIS
SAID I COULD
TRUST HIM IMPLICIT-
LY. HOW DID SHE
KNOW? WHAT
DOES SHE KNOW...?

ANOTHER
DISCONNECT
MESSAGE.
THIS ONE
AT HER
WORK
PHONE.

THANKS,
OPERATOR
NO... I'LL TRY
LATER.

EVEN THE OPERATOR
CAN'T GET THROUGH. WHAT-
EVER'S GOING ON, THERE'S GOT
TO BE MORE THAN ORDINARY RIOTS...



"...IN METROPOLIS."

ON REPORT...
FOR SLEEPING
ON THE JOB.
AGAIN. TRIED TO
TELL 'EM... I
NEVER SLEEP.
EVER

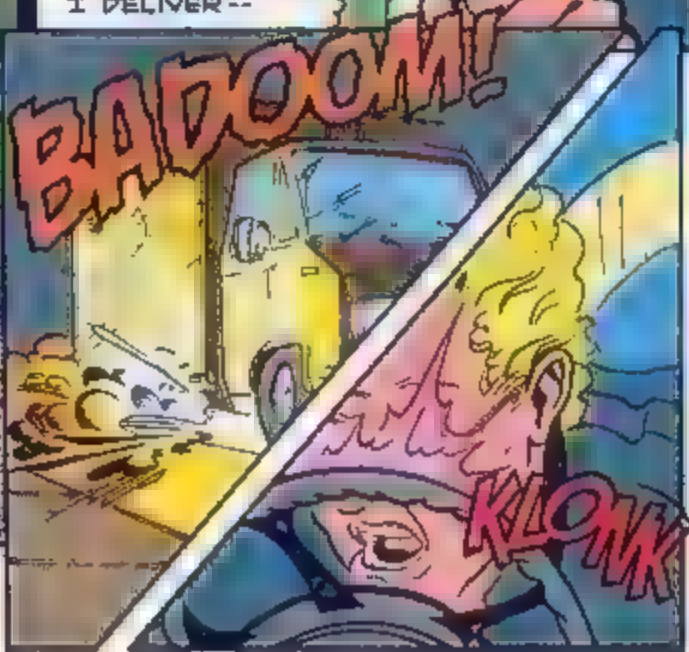
RUNNIN' LATE.
BETTER LATE THAN
NEVER. ONE WAY OR
ANOTHER, THE MAIL'S
COMIN' THROUGH.

HOW DOES IT
GO? "NEITHER RAIN
NOR SNOW NOR
SLEET..." MOTTO
DOESN'T MENTION
RIOTS.

SEEMS SILLY
TAKIN'
POWERS
INTO A WAR
ZONE.

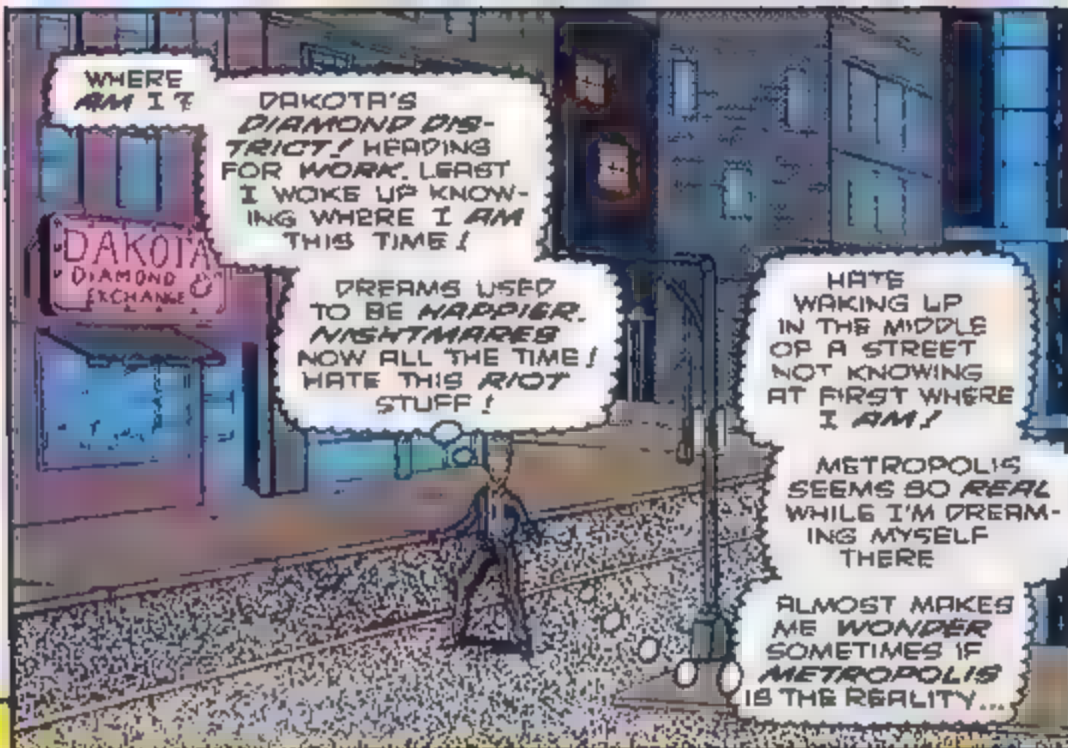
NOT MY
PROBLEM. MY
JOB'S GETTIN'
THE MAIL TO
ITS FINAL
DESTINATION...

NOT WORRYIN'
WHAT'S GONNA
HAPPEN TO
THE STUFF AFTER
I DELIVER--



BADDOOM!

KLONK



WHERE AM I?

DAKOTA'S DIAMOND DISTRICT! HEADING FOR WORK, LEAST I WOKE UP KNOWING WHERE I AM THIS TIME!

DREAMS USED TO BE HAPPIER. NIGHTMARES NOW ALL THE TIME! HATE THIS RIOT STUFF!

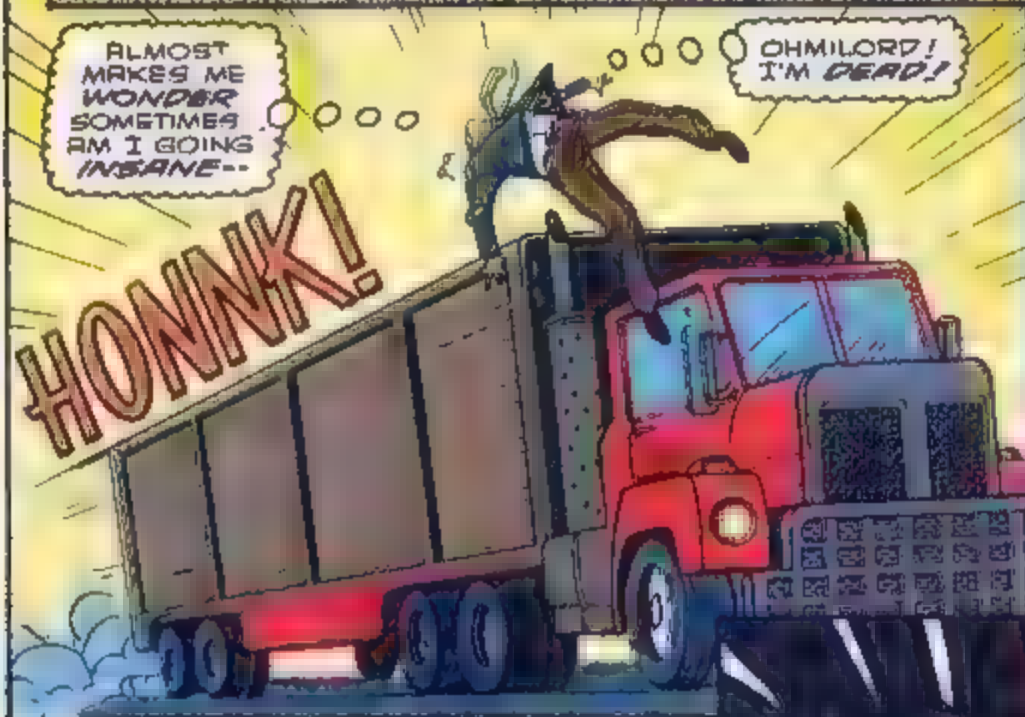
HATE WAKING UP IN THE MIDDLE OF A STREET NOT KNOWING AT FIRST WHERE I AM!

METROPOLIS SEEMS SO REAL WHILE I'M DREAMING MYSELF THERE

ALMOST MAKES ME WONDER SOMETIMES IF METROPOLIS IS THE REALITY...



...AND MY LIFE HERE IN DAKOTA'S JUST A DREAM.

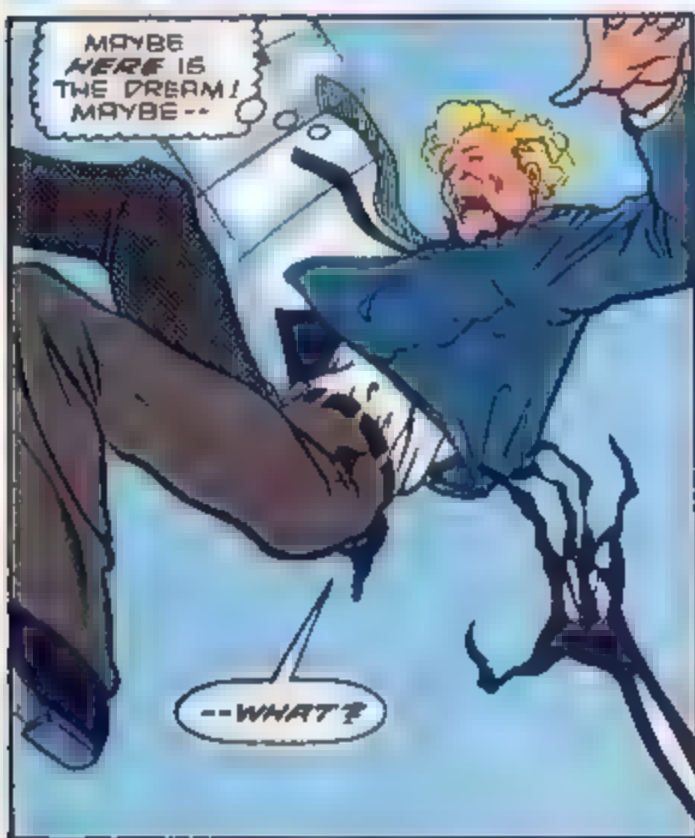


ALMOST MAKES ME WONDER SOMETIMES AM I GOING INSANE--

OHMILORD! I'M DEAD!



NO! ALIVE! HANGING HERE!



MAYBE HERE IS THE DREAM! MAYBE--

--WHAT?



NOOO!



Nooo!

ONE OF THE
BOMBS SET
BY THE UNDER-
WORLDERS
DETONATED!

YOU HIT
YOUR HEAD
BUT I'VE GOT
YOU NOW SIR
YOU'RE GOING
TO BE OKAY!

SUPERMAN!
THANKS! NAME'S
**BENTSON, FRED
BENTSON.**

I'M BACK--
IN METROPOLIS!
AND THE OTHER
PLACE **DAKOTA...**
THE MONSTER--

ALL OF IT
IS NOTHING BUT
A NIGHTMARE!
ISN'T IT?



HERE GOES--

AAAK!



--NOTHIN'!



COWBOY!

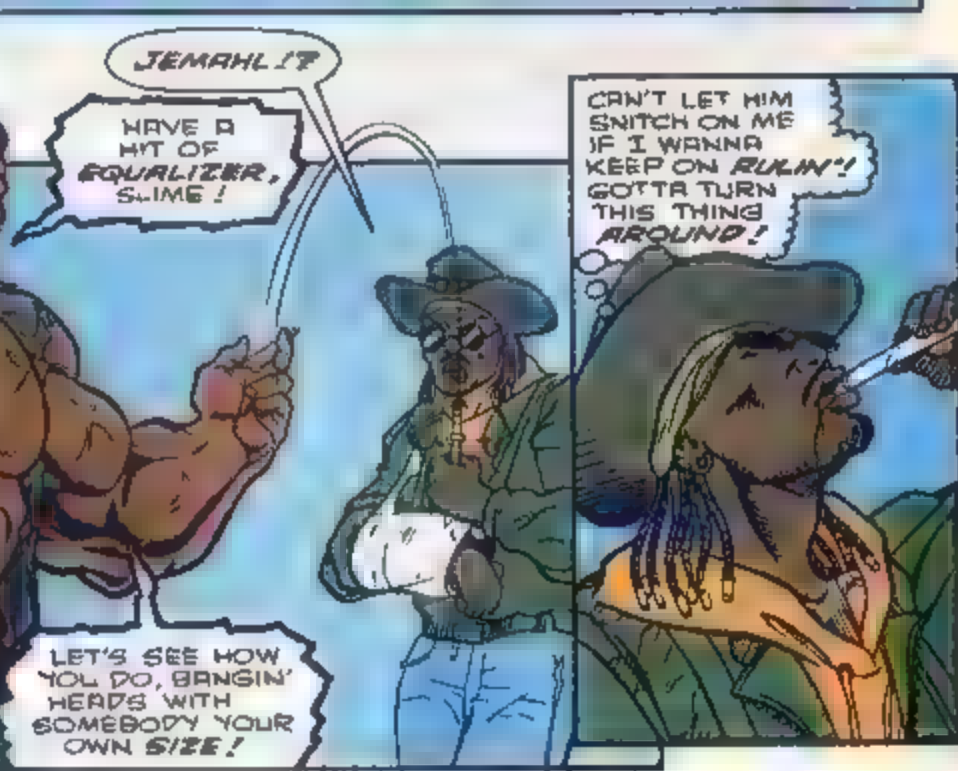
THE DOOR!



BAM!



YOU JACKED UP MY FAMILY, COWBOY! YOU BLEW AWAY A LITTLE KID!



JEMAH!?

HAVE A HIT OF EQUALIZER, SLIME!

CAN'T LET HIM SNITCH ON ME IF I WANNA KEEP ON RULIN'! GOTTA TURN THIS THING AROUND!

LET'S SEE HOW YOU DO, BANGIN' HEADS WITH SOMEBODY YOUR OWN SIZE!



YOU'RE GONE, BOY! AIN'T NUTHIN' 'BOUT US EQUAL! I'M GONNA TAKE YOU AART!

WHERE'D YOU GET THE TAR JEMBOY?

YOU GO OVER TO THE EASTLIES?

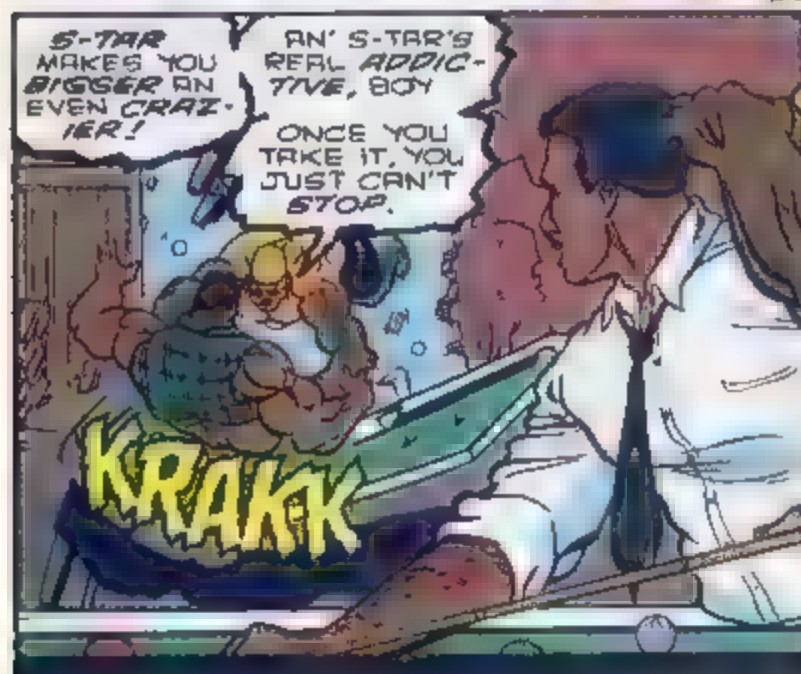
YOU'RE THE ONE WHO MADE THE DEAL, WITH AMALGAM!

HE KNOWS! HE MUST HAVE BEEN LISTENING. GOTTA DROP HIM NOW!

THAT AIN'T TAR YOU'RE ON, IS IT LOWLIFE?

PLAIN TAR MAKES YOU BIG AN' CRAZY.

KRASSH!



S-TAR MAKES YOU BIGGER AN' EVEN CRAZIER!

AN' S-TAR'S REAL ADDICTIVE, BOY

ONCE YOU TAKE IT, YOU JUST CAN'T STOP.

KRAKK

POOW!



DON'T KID YOURSELF, MAN! I DON'T WANNA STOP!

MAKES YOU REAL
STRONG RIGHT UP
TO THE TIME IT
KILLS YOU.

NOBODY'S SURVIVED
MORE THAN THREE
HITS TWO MORE AN'
YOU'RE *HEADED!*

DON'T SWEAT IT,
LOSER! YOU
WON'T BE AROUND
LONG ENOUGH
TO WATCH ME
DIE.

KRAK

JEM!
NO!

YOU'RE
ON
TAR!

WHAT HAVE
YOU *DONE...?*
ARE YOU
CRAZY?!!

WHY ARE YOU
ALWAYS STICKIN'
YOUR *NOSE*
WHERE IT'S NONE
OF YOUR *BUSI-*
NESS?

YOU'RE MY
NEPHEW!
THAT MAKES IT
MY BUSINESS!

BULL!
SAME
TIME POP
DIED...

YOU
DROPPED
OUT OF OUR
LIVES!

NO SWEAT,
WE MADE NEW
LIVES FOR
OURSELVES

GOT NEW
HEROES.

AN' WHEN
TROUBLE
CAME, I MADE
MOVES TO
PROTECT THE
FAMILY

PROTECT?

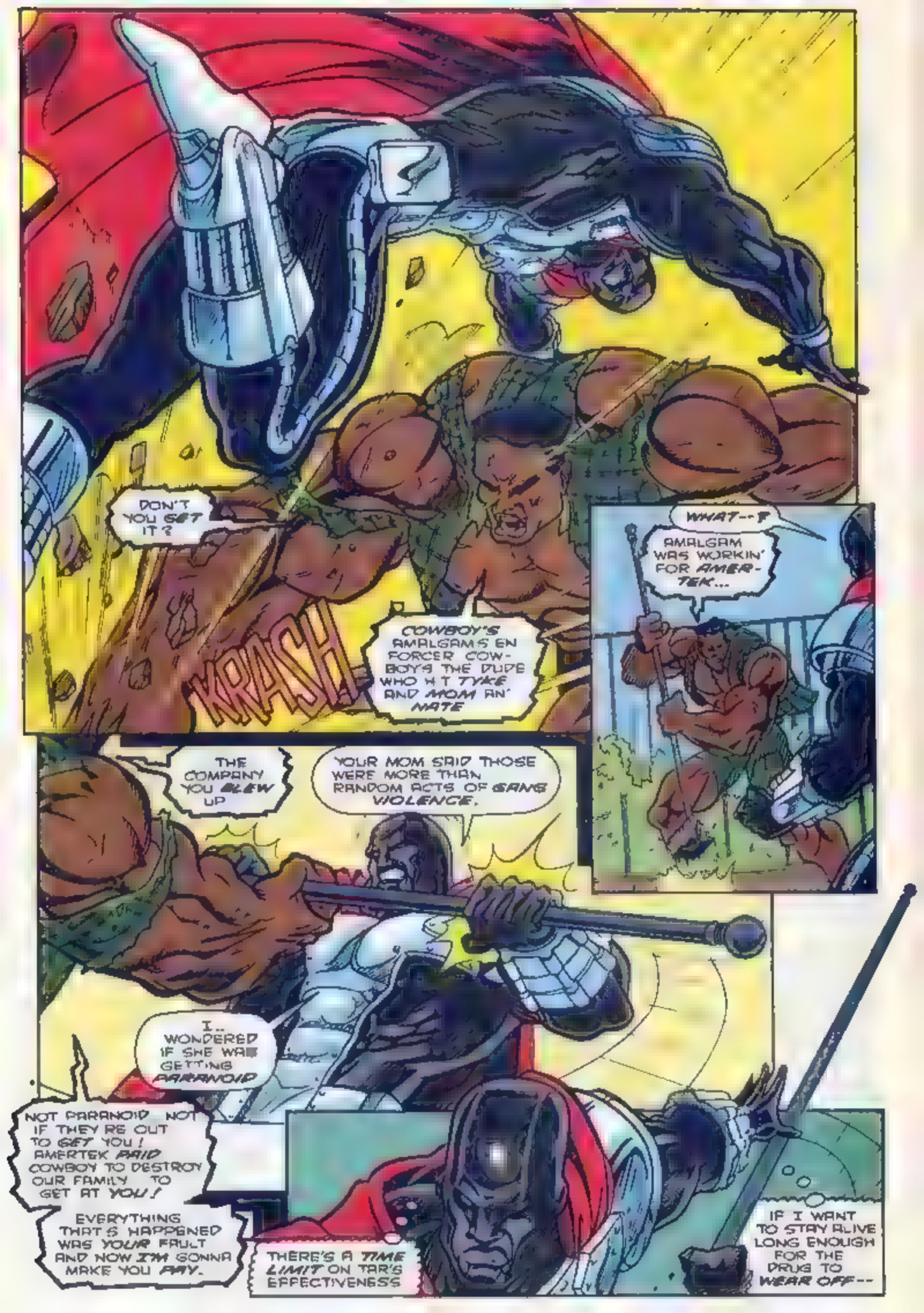
YEAH! I
JOINED SINAVE,
AND THE FAMILY
GOT PROTECTED.

I HAD IT
UNDER CON-
TROL, MAN
THEN YOU
SHOWED UP
AND RUINED
EVERYTHING

MY TIES
WITH SINAVE
THE TRUST OF
MY SQUAD THE
SAFETY OF MY
FAMILY

YEAH, YOU'RE
A REAL HERO.

THAT'S WHY
YOU'RE CHUGGIN'
TAR AND GUNNIN'
FOR COWBOY?



DON'T
YOU GET
IT?

KRASH!

COWBOY'S
AMALGAM'S EN
FORCER COW-
BOY'S THE DUDE
WHO H T TYKE
AND MOM AN'
NATE

WHAT--?

AMALGAM
WAS WORKIN'
FOR AMER-
TEK...

THE
COMPANY
YOU BLEW
UP

YOUR MOM SAID THOSE
WERE MORE THAN
RANDOM ACTS OF **SANE**
VIOLENCE.

I...
WONDERED
IF SHE WAS
GETTING
PARANOID

NOT PARANOID. NOT
IF THEY'RE OUT
TO GET YOU!
AMERTEK PAID
COWBOY TO DESTROY
OUR FAMILY TO
GET AT YOU!

EVERYTHING
THAT'S HAPPENED
WAS YOUR FAULT
AND NOW I'M GONNA
MAKE YOU PAY.

THERE'S A TIME
LIMIT ON TAR'S
EFFECTIVENESS

IF I WANT
TO STAY ALIVE
LONG ENOUGH
FOR THE
DRUG TO
WEAR OFF--

-- I'VE GOT TO DO SOMETHING, FAST...

...SINCE I DON'T WANT TO CHANCE POUNDING JEM INTO THE GROUND.

...WHEN HE COULD COME OFF THE TAR AT ANY SECOND.

BEST BET IS TO BIND HIM...

...WHILE HE COMES DOWN OFF THE DRUG CAPTIVE AUDIENCE.

MAY BE THE ONLY CHANCE I'VE GOT TO MAKE HIM LISTEN.

I KNEW YOU WERE ANGRY AT ME, JEM. I DIDN'T KNOW WHY. OR MAYBE I DIDN'T WANT TO KNOW.

YEAH, I CAME BACK HOME AND THE FAMILY GOT CAUGHT UP IN MY FIGHT.

BUT WEAPONS I INVENTED WERE BEING USED TO ARM DEECEE'S GANGS.

INNOCENT PEOPLE WERE DYING, JEM...

...AND YOU'RE TELLING ME I SHOULD'VE SAT BACK AND DONE NOTHING?

I'M TELLIN' YOU... WHAT YOU DID...

...WAS DRAG US INTO YOUR WAR!

THAT MAY BE TRUE OF THE OTHERS, JEM. BUT YOU WERE ALREADY IN THE WAR.

YOU WERE HANGING WITH A GANG THAT WAS USING THOSE GUNS.

YOU WERE THE ONE I WANTED MOST TO SAVE.

I'VE HAD ENOUGH, COLONEL! THIS TIME IT'S PERSONAL!

THIS TIME YOU'RE GONNA BE THE ONE TO DIE!

ME...?

YOU'RE MY NEPHEW, JEM.

I LOVE YOU, BOY. I DIDN'T WANT ANYTHING BAD TO HAPPEN TO YOU.

THE COLONEL ORDERED MY FAMILY HIT.

TRIED TO DESTROY THEM JUST TO GET BACK AT ME.



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STEEL

PREVIOUSLY IN STEEL: John Henry Irons's return to Washington, DC, has inadvertently led to a wave of violence against his entire family. Their home has been attacked by armored hitmen. John's nephew, Tyke, has been shot in a "drive-by." His niece, Natasha, was the victim of a hit-and-run. Now, another of his nephews, Jemahl, himself a gang member, has decided that he's seen enough. He's going to take action, even though it may cost him his life...

Dear Steel letters page,

I have been reading comics for twelve years now, and this is the first time I've written a letter to one. I want to begin by saying I love what you guys are doing here. I was very impressed by what I saw in the first issue of this book.

In issue #1, John's grandmother called him the "black Superman." I couldn't agree more. When I first read the "Reign of the Supermen" storyline, I was happy to see an African-American as the "Man of Steel." For you guys to make the most popular character in comic-book history a black man was a very bold undertaking. I was pleased to see that the Man of Steel was shown to be just as strong and heroic as the other Supermen. He proved that he could hold his own against the most dangerous foes and was worthy as anyone else to call himself Superman.

As I said before, I've been reading comics for over a decade, and I've often been disappointed in the way black super-heroes were portrayed. Often they were cast as sidekicks to more important heroes, with little depth of identity given to their character. They would never have any deep ties to the black community or concerns for the problems facing black America.

John Henry Irons is different from this traditional depiction of the black super-hero. He is an intelligent, articulate black engineer. He has succeeded in the business world without forgetting where his roots are. He could still be considered a hero even if he had never donned the armor of Steel. As Steel, he has proven himself to be a hero who can stand on his own. He has the character, power and intelligence to be a major player in the DC Universe.

So please keep making these stories great. Let Steel become not a second-class super-hero, but a first-class superman!

Roland E. Shelton
Philadelphia, PA

P.S. I'd like to see a rematch between Steel and the Eradicator. The first match was good, but the "Last Son of Krypton" gave the impression he was holding back. I want to see them go at it with no constraints or reserve.

Sorry, no plans right now for the Eradicator to appear here, but if it's the former "Last Son" you're looking for, check out upcoming issues of OUTSIDERS for more of his story.

Hey, Steelers,

The first issue of STEEL now rests in a plastic bag, carefully sealed from the detrimental effects of the atmosphere. I loved the new book and wanted to let you all know that I'm hooked.

I've been a loyal fan of Marvel Comics for some years, but the new "Reign of Tomorrow" books have pulled me from the abyss of my evil ways!

Now just a couple of comments/questions about my favorite metahead:

- 1) Is there any possibility for a love interest in Mr. Irons's future?
- 2) Are we going to see a recurring villain for our hero?

Jeremy W. Collard
Skaneateles, NY

Glad to hear that you're hooked! As far as a romance for John goes...well, I think that Shauna is currently single. We'll see what happens.

The Colonel and Amalgam are our current set of recurring baddies, but it won't be long before we see some superpowered types giving Steel's armor a good workout!

Dear Frank,

To say I've been thoroughly impressed with the first two issues of your new series STEEL would be somewhat of an understatement, at least as far as I'm concerned. The mixture of action, intense characterization, and the addressing of some controversial topics makes this book more than just a pleasure to read and reread.

The way Jon Bogdanove and Louise Simonson are focusing on the subject of youth gangs is very fascinating, not to mention extremely realistic. Jemahl's reasoning for his joining a gang seems all too logical, but there's far more to it than Jem thinks. It's not just protecting each other. No, it's protection to get something in return for it later. And most of the time, that "something" involves high-

ly illegal activities. Good thing his uncle John, whom we all know now as Steel, is willing to make a difference in his 'hood, Washington.

The newly introduced villain, Amalgam, showed lots of potential, and I, for one, wouldn't have minded if he had headed straight for the Steel Rogues Gallery...if it weren't for the fact that our Man of Steel took care of Amalgam's threat somewhat quickly, without even breaking a sweat. How about a rematch in the not too distant future? Sounds like music to my ears.

By the way, Chris Batista once again impressed me with his striking artwork this issue. The influences from Jon Bogdanove are still showing, but with this issue, I get the feeling he's slowly starting to establish his own unique style. Thumbs up, Chris, for a job well done.

The STEEL train is running and gaining speed, fellows! Luckily, I was able to leap aboard last month, and I more than intend to enjoy this ride through the city of Washington, DC! See you again next month!

Olav Beerner
The Netherlands
Europe

We won't railroad you. We plan to engineer whatever we can to keep this book on a caboose-kickin' express track to action and adventure. And Amalgam, who is already back on the streets, is sure to do what he can to derail Steel's peace of mind.

Thanks for writing!

Dear Steely-Eyed Ones,

Good job on STEEL #2. I like this title a great deal so far. I hope that the realistic patois of the street does not get left out. It makes this book seem quite real, not to mention the fine art in here. I'm glad that we are seeing John out of uniform as much as in. I think he can be just as much a good influence in his neighborhood as himself as he can help out in his alter ego of Steel.

I hope that we will not see Jemahl suddenly decide to leave the gangs behind and lead a life of purity and goodness. It isn't easy for a kid to bail out of the gang lifestyle, and it shouldn't be for Jemahl either. Show him struggling with his decision of which way to go. Maybe he should have to face up to the results of what happens because of his decision to stay in a gang.

I think this title has loads of potential. I hope it isn't wasted. I am not too worried, though. With folks like Louise and

Jon doing the writing, I know we are in for a lot of good stories. I look forward to many more great issues in this title. Thanks for the fun and entertainment.

Carl Pietrantonio
Laredo, TX

After the events of this issue, it looks like Jamahl's story is far from over. The drastic decision he makes this month will no doubt give him a new perspective on the way he lives his life. Whether that perspective is good or bad remains to be seen. Let's hope the Irons family, especially Natasha and John, will be there to help him pick up the pieces.

Dear Frank,

As good as the debut issue of STEEL was, this second issue was so much better. I love the focus of this book, as it has been examining the 'hood John Henry's family lives in and how his inventions are affecting it. Steel is quickly seeing how the weapon he created is directly affecting his own nephew, which has to hurt.

Also, I enjoyed the portrayal of Jamahl and his membership in the Skulls. Sadly, many inner-city kids like Jamahl really feel they have no other options besides joining a gang, especially since John Henry was gone and unable to provide a positive role model for Jamahl. It's no wonder he's fallen by the wayside. "I can hang tough...or I can be nothin'," as Jamahl says. I certainly hope one of the major themes in the years to come is how that statement is wrong.

Finally, I want to commend Jon Bogdanove and Louise Simonson. I already knew Louise is an excellent writer, but Bog has really impressed me. That man has some talent! And I'm glad Chris Batista is such an excellent penciller. I like Bog on MAN OF STEEL, so we need someone like Chris to take care of the art here. While I'm at it, I might as well compliment Rich, Andrew, Pat, and Gina, as they are all doing a good job. Everybody keep up the good work!

James Evans
Ithaca, NY

Dear Frank,

STEEL is honestly one of the most genuinely remarkable titles on the market, as #2 once again proved. The character of John Henry Irons is more appealing than ever, and Jon and Louise's entire concept is doing wonders.

"Turf War" was an interesting story, seemingly defying the laws of gang-war stories, the major law mandating that they be boring. Even the fine folks at the Batman office couldn't work up to top standards when working with teenage gangs. Not only did Louise, in her script, work the "war" scenario effectively, she made the characters engrossing. In fact, Steel's supporting cast/family alone are great characters, and one of the better casts that a comic book could rely on. There's no shying away

from children or grandmas, two things that Marvel is rather guilty of in their books.

Jamahl is a particularly interesting character, on the premise alone that it must be "cool" to have a super-hero as an uncle, while hanging around with a gang of hoods. I hope the family of Steel continues to figure prominently in this title, and that they must face life's little problems as well as the bigger ones (like being threatened by a cyborg while tied to a chair).

Steel is just as multifaceted as the rest of the cast members, no longer in the shadow of Superman. I would like to see issue-long flashbacks of John Henry's work at Amertek, to see exactly what motivates this hero so deeply. As for Amalgam, let's see Steel face off against some older villains: DC has so many of them that could be of use to you. Anyway, both Jon and Louise did an excellent job on the story, while the theme of the book is most impressive. You managed to keep your feet in "gritty soil" while not allowing the title to stray from the generally lighthearted attitude of the four monthly SUPERMAN titles. Nice job, everybody.

Despite the fact that Jon draws the ultimate Steel, Chris Batista gets better and better. A rising talent for sure, Chris's work looks seasoned enough to be passed off as work by an older professional, especially with Rich Faber on inks, and Gina Going creating some outstanding color to give the book a painted look. Chris's interpretation of Steel's costume is also interesting. While I'm curious about the different-colored patch on his gray-steel outfit, I sometimes wonder if the costume would look better all in one definite color.

Thanks for your time. This book is sure to have a long and rich run, as the perfect creative team is in place. And here's hoping that nobody snatches Chris and Rich away to another company, or Jon and Louise for that matter! Keep up the good work, and I'll be back in 30 days for more steel-plated excitement with the entire cast and creative team. Until next month...

Joey Marchese
Union, NJ

Dear Steelites,

The good work just keeps getting better! I'm glad to see Jon Bogdanove doing some plotting along with my fav'rit Superman writer, Louise Simonson. Is this Jon's first effort on the other side of the drawing table? The art by Batista, Faber, and Pepoy is first-rate, drawing African-Americans without resorting to caricature. While I'm giving credit, well, hey, great coloring and certainly fantastic editing on the part of Mr. Pittarrese (shameless butt-kissing).

I have lived near Dee Cee for about four years now and can respect the issues that you have chosen for Steel to deal with. The problems with guns and drugs are rampant here and in most urban areas, unfortunately, and ultimately are reflected in the DC Universe. It is refreshing to see a

strong positive role model in both John Henry and his family. This comic is, so far, doing a good job of showing how even a kid from a "good" family can succumb to peer pressure, and just the ease of availability of guns and illicit substances. Here is a kid like Jamahl who can even rationalize that by being a gang member he is protecting his family! How many hundreds or thousands of Jamahls are out there in the world who do "bad" things for "good" reasons? Or who haven't had the chance to see beyond their own neighborhood to see there are other opportunities? I can't wait to see how John Henry deals with the family matters as well as Amertek, etc. He will probably find out that dealing with heavily armed jerks is easy compared to dealing with his own nephew.

Anyway, the plot thickens. So, just what is TAR? Looks like a home laboratory version of Venom! Maybe Steel will have to hook up with Batman to get to the bottom of this. I hope by then it will be the real Batman and not the current pretender. Keep up the good work!

William E. Croupe
Gaithersburg, MD

Although TAR and Venom do share some similarities, I think that TAR is far more dangerous...and accessible. But if there is a connection, Steel would almost certainly have to team up with a certain Dark Knight. We'll see what happens.

And if you're a fan of Jon Bogdanove's writing, be sure to pick up this summer's STEEL Annual. It's the first Steel Elseworlds story ever, and Jon & Judy Bogdanove, along with new artist Humberto Ramos, are putting together a story that'll knock you for a loop! Watch for it this summer! But before that, check out...

NEXT ISSUE: He's mad as hell and he's not gonna take it anymore! The Colonel has interfered in John Henry Irons's life one time too many. Ever since John's return to D.C., he and his family have been in constant danger. This is where it ends!

Next month, Steel takes matters into his own hands and decides to stop Colonel Weston...*permanently!* Plus...

NEXT ISSUE PART II: Before you pick up next issue, you may want to pick up MAN OF STEEL #35, HARDWARE #17, SUPERBOY #6, and ICON #15. Why, you might ask? Well, in case you haven't heard, they're all part of "Worlds Collide," a multipart epic adventure that will, for the first time, team up the heroes of the DC Universe with the heroes of the Milestone Universe. Next month, it's Steel's turn to be drawn into the strange and deadly goings-on in Dekota! How does he get there? Be here next month for the answer!

—Frank Pittarrese
Gotta go watch
General Hospital...